

COVER SHEET

HAWAII REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

50 - 80-14-9905 SITE NAME/TYPE MERCHANT STREET DISTRICT
 SITE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER 1850-1900 DISTRICT HONOLULU
 AREA SEVEN square BLOCK s
 CATEGORY Single Feature ☒ Complex ☐ Place
 OWNERSHIP Public ☒ Private
 KNOWN PRESSURES ON SITE _____
 PRESENT LAND USE(S) _____
 DESTRUCTION No Known Future Danger ☒ Possible Future Danger ☐ Future Danger Certain
Present Danger ☐ Presently Being Destroyed ☐
 STATUS ☒ Occupied ☐ Unoccupied CONDITION Excellent ☒ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Deteriorated
 INTEGRITY Unaltered, Orig Loc ☐ Unaltered, Moved ☒ Altered, Orig Loc ☐ Altered, Moved
 ACCESSIBILITY ☒ Unrestricted ☐ Restricted ☐ Inaccessible
 LEGENDARY MATERIALS KNOWN Yes ☒ NO WRITTEN HISTORICAL MATERIALS ☒ Yes ☐ No
 SUSCEPTIBILITY TO INTERPRETATION Good ☐ Moderate ☐ Poor
 IMPORTANCE AS EXAMPLE OF TYPE SITE Good ☐ Moderate ☐ Poor
 RESEARCH POTENTIAL Good ☐ Moderate ☐ Poor
 LOCAL ATTITUDES ABOUT SITE Valuable ☐ Moderate Value ☐ Low Value ☐ Ambivalent
Unknown ☐
 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SITE (Columns 21-80)
 STAFF EVALUATION High Value ☒ Valuable ☐ Reserve ☐ Marginal
 SUGGESTED THEME(S) COMMERCE, ARCHITECTURE
 DATE SUBMITTED TO REVIEW BOARD _____

REVIEWER'S RECORD AND EVALUATION

NAME _____ Date Reviewed _____
 CATEGORY High Value ☐ Valuable ☐ Reserve ☐ Marginal
 SIGNIFICANCE National ☐ State ☐ Local
 RECOMMENDED DISPOSITION Nominate National Register ☐ State Register ☐ Staff Files
 RECOMMENDED THEMES:
 REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:

REVIEW BOARD EVALUATION RECORD

DATE REVIEWED 7/10/72 RECORDER _____
 OFFICIAL CATEGORY High Value ☒ Valuable ☐ Reserve ☐ Marginal
 OFFICIAL SIGNIFICANCE National ☒ State ☐ Local
 OFFICIAL THEMES COMMERCE, ARCHITECTURE
 OFFICIAL DISPOSITION ☒ National Register Nomination ☐ State Register ☐ Staff Files
 REVIEW BOARD COMMENTS:

VOTING RECORD: Cliver _____ Daws _____ Hormann _____ Jackson _____
 Kikuchi _____ Lind _____ Nagata _____ Paglinawan _____
 Roche _____ Tuggle _____



DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

STATE PARKS DIVISION

11/29/71

HAWAII REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

HISTORICAL SITES INFORMATION AND REVIEW FORM

HAWAII REGISTER OF HISTORICAL PLACES IDENTIFICATION NUMBER: 80 14 9905
island quad site number

NAME OF THE SITE:

Merchant Street Historical District

STREET ADDRESS (IF POSSIBLE):

individual addresses for buildings are shown on the attached map of the area.

DISTRICT:

Honolulu

LATITUDE-LONGITUDE COORDINATES:

TYPE OF SITE:

BUILDING _____

PUBLIC _____

INDUSTRIAL-COMMERCIAL _____

RELIGIOUS-EDUCATIONAL _____

RESIDENCE _____

OTHER _____

HISTORICAL SITE
(NO STRUCTURE) _____

HISTORICAL DISTRICT
X _____

LOCATION MAP OF THE SITE OR SKETCH OF THE BUILDING:

see attached map.

PRESENT INFORMATION ON THE SITE

PRESENT OWNERSHIP:

PUBLIC: FEDERAL _____ PRIVATE _____ BOTH ☒
STATE _____
CITY-COUNTY _____

NAME OF PRESENT OWNER: Multiple ownership

ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER:

OWNER'S ATTITUDE:

UNRESTRICTED RESEARCH ALLOWED ☒
RESTRICTED RESEARCH ALLOWED _____
NO RESEARCH ALLOWED _____

PRESENT USE OF THE SITE:

AGRICULTURAL _____ COMMERCIAL ☒ EDUCATIONAL _____ ENTERTAINMENT ☒
GOVERNMENT ☒ INDUSTRIAL _____ MILITARY _____ MUSEUM _____ PARK _____
RESIDENCE _____ RELIGIOUS _____ SCIENTIFIC _____ TRANSPORTATION _____ OTHER _____

PRESENT ACCESSIBILITY:

RESTRICTED ☒ UNRESTRICTED _____ NOT ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC _____

PRESENT CONDITION OF THE BUILDING (SITE): varied

EXCELLENT ☒ GOOD ☒ FAIR ☒ DETERIORATED ☒ RUINS _____

INTEGRITY OF THE SITE:

ALTERED ☒ UNALTERED _____ MOVED _____ ORIGINAL PLACE ☒

VERBAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AS IT IS AT PRESENT (ATTACH PHOTOS IF POSSIBLE):

see attached general statement about Merchant Street and statements about individual buildings

Kamehameha V Post Office was discussed previously and placed in Category A--valuable, to be recommended to the National Register.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC AND OTHER SOURCE INFORMATION

MAJOR LITERARY SOURCES:

"Merchant Street Notes" by Richard Greer in Hawaii Historical Review, Honolulu, 1969, pp. 183-199.

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS:

TITLE OF SURVEY: most of the buildings appear in the survey done by the
DATE OF SURVEY: Historic Buildings Task Force and are mentioned in their
RECORDS LOCATED AT: publication, Old Honolulu.
Records are at the Archives of Hawaii

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Bureau of Conveyances
Tax Office Annex
Honolulu

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE POSSIBLE FUTURE USE OF THE SITE:

At present, there appears to be considerable interest in the restoration of the buildings in the Merchant Street area. Those already restored appear to be successful businesses and other owners are following the example. The Merchant Square Company, headed by Alan Beall, has been the leader in this restoration. His offices are located in the Yokohama Specie Bank. He welcomes visitors and questions about his future plans.

SURVEY COMPLETED BY

Robert M. Fox

DATE

11/22/71

COURT BUILDING
(OLD POLICE STATION)
842 Merchant Street
Architect, Louis E. Davis
1930

The old police station is unique in the Merchant Street area. It is the youngest building that contributes to the overall character and the largest, occupying the full length of the block between Bethel and Nuuanu Streets. The building consists of three stories and a basement.

A combination of stucco, red tile roof, and generous use of tasteful decoration work together to create an architecture reflecting Spanish Renaissance with a moorish influence. Special attention has been given to door and window openings. The main entrance is over eighteen feet in height, the opening being decorated with Terra Cotta in the form of side scrolls, columns and various decorative elements and four large paneled doors. The side entrance is smaller but with much the same emphasis given to the door frame.

The Ewa end of the building is unique in that stairs swirling in two directions give access to various levels of judges' chambers located on the second and third levels of the building. The stairway being the total width of the building at this point and being capped by a round tile roof.

Access to the Diamond Head service area is gained through two massive, low arches.

Cast concrete balconies, wrought iron balconies, metal window grilles, perforated concrete window grilles, all embellished generously with decoration, contribute to the overall handsome appearance of the building.

Great care had been given to the interior space and architectural detail, much of which has been covered or changed during subsequent remodeling. Still visible is the coffered wood ceiling, ceramic tile wainscoat, wrought iron handrails, brick and tile flooring, decorative cornice, peaked arches, concrete coffered ceiling with painted designs and granite faced columns. A great deal of the original interior is still visible in the main entry and stairway.

Recently, the exterior received an extensive coat of paint which indicates the building is still receiving adequate maintenance. The building appears to be in sound structural condition and is a major contribution to the overall character of Merchant Street.

Friend Building
926 Bethel Street
George Lucas, Builder, 1887

The two story brick structure was originally built to house The Friend of Temperance and Seamen, Hawaii's first periodical started in 1843.

This simple structure is representative of small commercial buildings of the time. It is well proportioned and displays examples of the excellent brick craftsmanship being built in Honolulu in the late 1800's. The Bethel Street facade is enhanced by arched window opening on the second floor, corbeled cornice and a simulated gable parapet.

The lower floor has been "modernized" and much of the original character has been lost. A metal canopy now hangs over the first floor.

Today, the building is covered with drab stucco and paint burying beneath it the original character.

The building is currently in good condition and receiving standard maintenance. It is now housing business offices.

Hawaiian Gazette Building
76-84 Merchant Street
George Lucas, Builder, 1881

The two story brick building was originally constructed to accommodate the Robert Grieve and Co. printing concern on the second floor with the lower level being let to shops.

Since its construction in 1881, the building has housed many businesses and seen many alterations. Still visible under layers of paint and plaster is the building name on the parapet. Arched lintels are visible over each window on the second floor along with bolts on either side indicating steel shutters once enhanced the facade. A sidewalk canopy provides shade over the "modernized" street level which sports aluminum doors and windows.

The simple structure has tasteful ornamentation above the second floor windows and along the parapet. It is a well proportioned structure giving an excellent example of the use of brick in commercial buildings during the late 1800's.

Although altered at various times, the building appears to be in good condition and appears to be receiving standard maintenance. With thoughtful remolding and use of paint and textures, the building could easily be transformed to its original appearance.

Water House Building

The Water House Building, sandwiched between the Royal Spaghetti House and the Yokohama Specie Bank is a two story brick structure offering only a small facade to Merchant Street. The simple clean lines and unpretentious character contributes to the overall scale and texture of Merchant Street.

Peeling stucco has exposed brick structure giving the building a weathered aged appearance.

The building is in good condition and receiving standard maintenance.

Yokohama Specie Bank
36 Merchant Street
H. L. Kerr, Architect, 1909

This elegant two story structure provides a major contribution to the character of Merchant Street. It was constructed of concrete and faced with brick and granite. The eclectic style is accented by the elaborate arched entry at the corner of the building supported on either side by Ionic columns. Two story pilasters with carved capitals support an ornate frieze with portals decorated by classic wreath and floral carvings, above which an ornate cornice is topped with a continuous balustrade*.

The interior is as richly embellished as the exterior, displaying a marbled wainscoat, coffered ceiling and classic metal balustrade with oriental motif. Much of this detail had been covered during various remodelings and is only now being rediscovered and uncovered.

Currently one of the main backers and initiators of the Merchant Square movement, The Hawaii Shopping Center Corporation, has their main office on the second floor of the building and is upgrading the building to its previous level.

The building is in excellent condition and receiving above standard maintenance.

* adorned at the corner by a carved baroque medallion.

Royal Saloon
14 Merchant Street
1890

The one story brick building is the only remaining saloons in the area which catered to Honolulu's active port. It was built by W. C. Peacock, who later managed the Moana Hotel in Waikiki.

For years the building lay dormant, its character hidden beneath layers of drab paint. Recently taken over and re-named the Royal Spaghetti House, the building has been brought back to life. Sensitive use of paint has transformed the once drab, seemingly nondescript building into an aesthetic contribution to Merchant Street. Arched door and window openings, brick columns supporting an ornamental cornice and balustrade are among the outstanding exterior features. The interior has been refurbished including an ancient wooden bar ornately carved and decorated, furnishings of the period (random selection) and other decorations which recall the early use of the building.

Currently, the building is in excellent condition and is receiving above standard maintenance.

Bishop Estate Building
71-77 Merchant Street
1896

Originally, the two story structure was built to house the offices of the Bishop Estate, C. R. Bishop Trust and Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum.

The dark grey lava stone was taken from the Kamehameha quarries. The Merchant Street facade is an excellent example of imaginative, decorative, rusticated masonry with arched door and window openings on the ground level, large rectangular windows above with four projected pilasters of stone supporting an ornate parapet. A variety of textures and patterns decorate the upper portion of the wall giving the small structure a sense of solidity. Its fortress-like appearance creates an illusion of the building being larger than it really is. The small building is a major contribution to Merchant Street.

Currently, it is in excellent condition and receiving standard maintenance.

Melchers Building
51 Merchant Street
1854

The Melchers Building, being the oldest existing building in downtown Honolulu, is of exceptional historical and architectural value.

Built to house the retail establishment of Melchers and Reiner, the two story structure was constructed of coral stone, the texture of which has been lost under layers of stucco and paint. The plan is a simple rectangular with few embellishments or decoration. Windows on the lower floor have been filled with brick and a "modern" aluminum store front entry has been imposed on the Merchant Street facade. The upper floor double hung panel windows are still operable, above which a simple cornice and small parapet surround the building.

The interior has been extensively altered and now houses the City Prosecutor's office.

Currently the building appears to be in good structural condition and is receiving standard maintenance.

With a more sympathetic occupant, the building could once again be an aesthetic as well as historic contribution to Honolulu.